INSOMNIACS.LTD

COMPLETE GAME DESIGN BIBLE

Including: The Expanded Universe, Crater City Atlas, Character Compendium,

Game I & Game II Full Design, Framework Rules, and All Lore

"Sleep is the cousin of death. We chose neither." — found on a napkin, The Meridian Bar, Night One

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PART ONE: THE UNIVERSE — ORIGIN, MYTHOLOGY & THE BOOK

I.I — The Anthology Within the Anthology

At the center of the Insomniacs.Ltd universe exists a real-world artifact: a battered paperback called IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, published by a defunct small press in 1989, author listed only as 'A. Creel.' The book is out of print. No copies exist in any library database. It surfaces occasionally on used-book sites for prices that seem wrong — too cheap, then suddenly too expensive, then gone.

Inside the book is a nested anthology: a collection called FIVE ACCOUNTS, presented as found documents — diary entries, transcribed audio recordings, Polaroid captions, bar receipts, and torn newspaper clippings — that tell the story of five strangers who converged nightly at a bar in a city called Crater during a week when everything fell apart.

The five accounts blur. The handwriting in the diary sections shifts mid-entry. Timestamps contradict each other. One entry appears to be written from a perspective that cannot exist: a dead man describing his own death from the outside. Players who encounter fragments of this in-game text are invited to determine which version of reality is correct — or whether the question itself is the point.

The book's final chapter is blank. Not white. The paper is there. But nothing was ever printed on it. Scholars (in the game's lore) debate whether it was a printing error, an intentional statement, or evidence that Creel never finished — because Creel, whoever that was, disappeared before the book shipped.

I.II — The Cosmic Architecture: What Crater Is

Crater is not a metaphor. It is named for an actual geological impact crater, 4.7 kilometers wide, at the center of which the city was built in 1889 by a mining consortium who believed the crater's mineral deposits were valuable. They were not. What the crater contained instead was something the miners called 'the Deep Seam' — a formation of dark crystalline rock that appeared to absorb light and, according to several early accounts, produced a low-frequency sound audible only at night.

The city was built anyway. Cities get built anyway.

Over 130 years, Crater grew into a mid-sized industrial city of approximately 400,000 people, with a downtown, four distinct neighborhoods, an industrial port, a university, a zoo, a defunct subway system, and a crater-rim park that locals use for jogging, drug deals, and looking at the skyline while feeling complicated things.

The Deep Seam still hums. Seismologists have noted it. They filed reports. The reports are in the city archive. Nobody read them.

The cosmological premise — never stated directly in either game, only assembled from fragments — is this: the crater is not a natural impact site. The geometry of the rock formation below the city is non-Euclidean. Surveys taken by the original mining company in 1889, if extrapolated using methods that did not exist in 1889 (which is itself a problem), suggest the formation extends not downward but outward — in a direction that has no name in standard spatial language. Three surveyors who spent a week underground in 1889 returned unable to sleep. They never slept again. None of them lived past the year.

Sleep deprivation in Crater is, statistically, significantly above the national average. The city has fourteen sleep clinics. None of them work especially well.

I.III — The Tone Stack: Genre DNA

Insomniacs.Ltd is a noir cosmic horror true crime psychological thriller anthology mystery. These are not contradictions. They are the point.

The noir layer: every character in Crater has something to hide, and the city at night looks beautiful and smells like machine oil and river water. Guilt is the weather. Information costs something. Everyone is working an angle, even the people who think they are not.

The cosmic horror layer: the horror is not monsters. The horror is geometry, time, repetition, and the suspicion that consciousness is an error the universe has not yet corrected. Characters who stay awake too long begin to perceive things that cannot be disproven. The games never resolve whether these perceptions are real. The evidence points both ways simultaneously.

The true crime layer: everything is documented. There are files. There are reports. There are witness statements that don't match the physical evidence. The city has an official history and an actual history, and the gap between them is where the five insomniacs live.

The psychological layer (Mr. Robot register): the games are deeply interested in unreliable perception, dissociation, projection, and the way people construct narratives about themselves that serve their needs rather than the truth. Characters lie to the player. Characters lie to themselves. The player, if they are paying attention, eventually suspects that they are also lying to themselves.

The Tarkovsky layer: time moves strangely. Some sequences are very long and very quiet. There are rooms that seem to mean something. Water appears in unusual places. Dreams and waking are the same texture. Beauty is allowed to be frightening.

The Fight Club layer: identity is unstable. At least two major characters are not who they appear to be, and not in a twist-reveal way but in the way that nobody is really who they appear to be, and the question is whether that's a trauma response or just the human condition.

PART TWO: CRATER CITY — THE FULL ATLAS

II.I — City Overview

Population: 412,000 (official census). Actual nighttime population, per the five insomniacs' running count: impossible to determine, because it keeps changing.

Layout: Crater sits in a shallow bowl, the crater rim forming a ring of elevated ground around the perimeter. The city center is the lowest point. Roads radiate outward like a damaged spiderweb — some spoke-straight, some curving around old industrial infrastructure, some ending without explanation. The city was never planned as a whole; it accreted. This shows.

The city has seven named districts and several unnamed zones that residents refer to by landmark or reputation.

The Sunken Quarter (City Center)

The oldest part of Crater, built directly above the original mining infrastructure. Streets here are cobblestone over asphalt over older cobblestone. Buildings are dense, four-to-eight stories, pressed together without alleys in places. The Meridian Bar is here. The city archive is here. The building that used to be the newspaper is here — now it's condominiums, but the printing press is still in the basement, and someone runs it at night, and nobody knows who.

The Sunken Quarter smells like old paper, coffee, and something electrical. The light here, at night, has a quality that photographers have tried to describe and cannot. It is neither warm nor cold. It is the color of a thought you cannot quite complete.

Key locations: The Meridian Bar, City Archive (The Vault), The Crater Courier Building (now MERIDIAN TOWER condos, press still active in basement), The Overnight Pharmacy (24-hour, run by a man named Georgi who has not been seen in daylight in eleven years), Pawn & Prophecy (a pawnshop that also does tarot readings and seems to know things), St. Anselm's Church (closed 1974, reopened by persons unknown circa 2019, services held at 3 AM, no denomination identifiable).

The Varnish (Former Industrial Port District)

West of center, along the Crater River. The port is defunct — the river silted up in the 1970s and was never dredged — but the warehouses remain and have been repurposed variously as artist studios, illegal fight venues, a very large furniture storage operation that everyone suspects is a front, and one warehouse that is simply locked and has been locked for as long as anyone currently living can remember.

The Varnish is where Crater's economic life happens at 2 AM. It is organized crime's preferred operating district, not because it's particularly hidden but because the police prefer not to come here, and the people who live here prefer not to call them.

Key locations: Warehouse 14 (The Locked One), The Foundry (underground venue — music, fights, other things), Remi's Boatyard (boats in dry dock, Remi deceased 1991, operation continues under unclear management), Crane Terminal A (operational crane, used for unclear purposes at night), The Eel (a bar that does not advertise, cash only, a different menu depending on who you are).

Morningside (Upper-Middle Residential)

East of center, climbing the crater's inner rim. Tree-lined streets, Victorian houses subdivided into apartments, a small commercial strip with a coffee shop that's been there forever and a cycle of boutiques and artisan businesses cycling in and out every two years. The university's faculty housing is here. So is the mayor's residence — not the official one (that's downtown), but the real one, where he actually lives, which is a Victorian double on Calloway Street that he owns under a holding company.

Morningside looks ordinary. It mostly is. Three of the five insomniacs live here. The proximity is not coincidental.

Key locations: Mayor Aldric's private residence (13 Calloway Street), Dr. Noor's apartment (above the laundromat), Theo's place (third-floor walk-up, back bedroom faces the crater park), The Overnight (a diner, open 24 hours, frequented by the sleepless and the haunted), Morningside Community Center (used by a group that calls itself the Vigil Society, Thursdays 11 PM – 4 AM).

The Flats (Working Class, South)

South of center, flat terrain (the only part of the city that is actually flat), dense row housing, a grid-pattern street layout that is a relief after the chaos of the Sunken Quarter. The Flats is where Crater's manufacturing jobs used to be. Most of those jobs are gone. What remains: two operational factories, a large supermarket open 24 hours, a boxing gym, a funeral parlor that is the busiest business in the district, and a community of Crater's longest-established families, many of whom have been here since the mining era and have their own relationships with the city's geological peculiarities.

Key locations: Kowalczyk's Funeral Home (where evidence sometimes surfaces, as funerals are good places for paperwork to move), The Flat Earth Gym (where Sergeant Voss trains at 5 AM every day, rain or catastrophe), Superstore 24 (enormous, fluorescent, the kind of place where late-night encounters feel cinematic), Rosa's Textiles (a factory, second shift runs 11 PM – 7 AM, the workers have a particular relationship with the crater's nocturnal hum).

The Academy District (University Area, North)

North of center, built around Crater University, established 1921. The university's architecture is brutalist concrete meeting Victorian brick in ways that should not work and do not quite work. The geology department published the original Deep Seam surveys in 1967 and has been quietly suppressed/defunded ever since. The psychology department runs the city's university-affiliated sleep study. That study's data is the most alarming dataset in Crater that nobody has reported on.

Key locations: Crater University main campus, The Seam Studies Archive (unofficial, maintained by a graduate student named Park who has not graduated yet and

shows no signs of doing so), The Sleep Lab (basement of Whitmore Hall, Dr. Yuen presiding, seventeen subjects currently enrolled, four of them are not students), The Unnamed Tunnel (connects the geology building to what used to be the city's defunct subway system, sealed in 1983, currently unsealed by persons unknown), The 24-Hour Library Reading Room.

Crater Rim (The High Ground)

The elevated ring around the city's edge. The crater rim is partly park, partly private estates, partly a nature reserve that nobody visits at night except people who visit it at night. The views of the city from the rim are exceptional. On clear nights you can see every lit window. You can watch the city breathe.

The Crater Rim is where Crater's old money lives. It is also, according to three separate archived police reports filed in different decades, a location associated with disappearances. None of the reports use the word 'associated.' They don't need to.

Key locations: Rim Park (public, 24-hour), The Old Observatory (decommissioned 1978, privately purchased, current owner not of public record), The Aldric Estate (ancestral home, now abandoned, different from the mayor's current residence), The Antenna Field (a cluster of defunct communications towers, a popular spot for late-night gatherings of people the city prefers not to officially acknowledge).

The Channel (No Man's Land)

A strip between the Varnish and the Sunken Quarter that does not really belong to either. Former transit hub — the defunct subway had its main station here. The station is still there, underground, accessible through maintenance hatches that are technically locked. The Channel at street level is small businesses, a lot of them with the curtains permanently drawn, a bus depot that operates all night, and The Drift Hotel: 94 rooms, hourly or nightly rates, no questions, an elevator that was last inspected in 2009 and probably works, a lobby with a TV always on and always at low volume, a desk clerk named Del who has worked every night shift for sixteen years and whose observational memory is the closest thing Crater has to an all-knowing narrator.

Key locations: The Drift Hotel, The Channel Bus Depot (buses run all night, routes 7 and 14 go places that are not on the official map), The Subway (Crater Line, closed 1983, currently partially reactivated by unknown parties — trains run at 2 AM and 4 AM on no posted schedule), Moth Club (a brothel, operating as a 'massage parlor and private social club,' fourth floor of an unmarked building on Channel Street, managed with discretion and exhaustive knowledge of the city's power structure by a woman known as Madam Isolde).

PART THREE: CHARACTER COMPENDIUM — ALL PRINCIPALS

III.I — The Five Insomniacs (Main Playable / Focus Characters)

1. NADIA VOSS — Age 34, Former Detective, Current: Nothing Official

Background: Nadia was a homicide detective with the Crater PD for eight years. Two years ago, she was suspended pending an Internal Affairs review following an incident that she will not discuss and that the IA review declined to resolve definitively. She was not fired. She was not reinstated. She exists in a bureaucratic suspension that has lasted long enough to feel permanent. She pays rent by working informal skip-tracing jobs for a bail bondsman named Lorca.

Sleep history: Nadia has not had a full night of sleep in approximately fourteen months. She does not know the exact date it began. She fell asleep one night at 3:12 AM (she knows this because she noted it in her case journal, a habit from her detective years), then woke at 3:47 AM from a dream she will not describe, and has not slept more than forty-five consecutive minutes since.

Personality: Nadia operates like a very good detective who no longer has access to the resources that make detective work legitimate. She notices everything, trusts no conclusions, and is deeply, almost professionally suspicious of her own perceptions. She is not warm. She is not cold either. She is precise and she is tired in a way that has become her entire aesthetic.

The thing she is hiding: The IA incident involved a shooting. The person she shot was unarmed. The reason she shot was that she saw something — in the room, behind the suspect — that made her pull the trigger in terror. She has never told anyone what she saw. The investigation found no evidence of anything in the room. She cannot reconcile this. The insomnia started the night she stopped trying.

Side gig during game: occasional nighttime surveillance jobs for Lorca. The surveillance targets turn out to be connected. Nadia notices this on Night Three and says nothing to anyone for eighteen hours.

2. ELIAS THORNE — Age 41, Documentary Filmmaker, Currently Between Projects

Background: Elias made one well-received documentary ten years ago — a film about a small town in the Midwest where an industrial accident was being covered up. The film changed nothing. The company is still operating. The people are still sick. Elias has been trying to make a follow-up film for a decade. He has eighty hours of footage of Crater. He cannot find the shape of what he is trying to say.

Sleep history: Elias began experiencing insomnia three years ago, which he initially attributed to creative anxiety and then, with increasing unease, to the footage he was reviewing. He has caught things in his footage that were not there when he was filming. Not paranormal things. Or not obviously paranormal. Reflections that don't correspond to the room. A figure in the background of an exterior shot who matches no one present. He keeps cataloguing these. His catalogue has 47 entries.

Personality: Elias is warm in a way that functions as an interviewing tool — people talk to him because he seems to genuinely care, and he does genuinely care, but he is always also composing the shot. He has a medium-format film camera he carries everywhere (he shoots on film, not digital, for reasons he has articulated in various ways that all amount to: film feels like it's catching something real). He is drinking more than he should and is aware of this.

The thing he is hiding: His documentary about the industrial cover-up was not entirely his idea. He had a source who pointed him at the story, gave him documents, helped him build the case — and then, before the film came out, died by suicide. Elias included nothing about the source in the film, to protect them, he told himself. But the source's family believes the film's success is built on their relative's work and death, and they are not wrong. The guilt has the specific texture of success contaminated at its root.

Side gig: He tells people he is filming a documentary. He is. He is also being paid by an unnamed media company to gather footage under a separate, confidential agreement whose terms he has not fully read. This will become relevant.

3. DR. NOOR SALEEM — Age 38, Clinical Psychologist, Private Practice

Background: Noor has a private practice in Morningside, three days a week. She also consults for the city's crisis intervention unit — which is how she ended up in the orbit of the mayor's office, the police department, and several of the city's more powerful institutions. She knows too much about too many people, all of it protected by confidentiality, which means she can see the city's entire architecture of pathology and can say nothing. This is making her unwell.

Sleep history: Noor's insomnia is not the dramatic sudden-onset kind. It crept. For two years she has been sleeping less and less, convinced she was simply overworked. The sleep deprivation has begun affecting her clinical work in subtle ways she is aware of and larger ways she is not. She has begun, very quietly, self-medicating with a compound she obtained from a contact at the university pharmacy. The compound was described to her as 'extended-release melatonin.' It is not extended-release melatonin.

Personality: Noor is the most outwardly composed of the five. She has trained her face into a professional neutrality that she sometimes forgets to turn off. She is extremely good at listening and has strong opinions she rarely shares. She reads people with clinical accuracy and finds this exhausting because once you see the architecture, you cannot stop seeing it.

The thing she is hiding: One of her current clients is telling her, in sessions, about a series of events that Noor has independently verified are occurring — events connected to the city-wide disturbance. The client does not know Noor knows. Noor

does not know who sent her the verification. She received it anonymously, through a method she cannot trace. Someone is using her as a vector for information.

4. THEO MARSDEN — Age 27, Freelance Coder / Occasional Hacker

Background: Theo dropped out of Crater University's computer science program three years ago, eighteen credits from graduation, for reasons he characterizes as 'structural disagreements with the institution.' He lives alone in a third-floor apartment in Morningside, sustains himself through a mix of legitimate remote coding contracts, security consulting (grey-area), and one very large ongoing project he refers to in his notes as THE DRAIN, the nature of which is revealed gradually across the game.

Sleep history: Theo has not slept in a conventional cycle since he was approximately twenty. He runs on what he calls 'power architecture' — ninety-minute sleep blocks, twice a day, scheduled algorithmically based on his circadian data. This worked adequately until six weeks ago, when the algorithm's recommendations began correlating with specific events in the city that he had not told the algorithm about. He does not sleep regularly at all now. He is running for three hours, fragmented, and the data from his body monitoring is producing numbers that should not be physiologically possible.

Personality: Theo is the youngest and the least socially functional. He talks in compressed bursts, references things obliquely, has a black humor that functions as armor, and is the one who, when everyone else is processing emotionally, has already built a spreadsheet. He is also the one who, when the emotional thing finally hits him, hits him harder than anyone else because he has been deferring it.

The thing he is hiding: THE DRAIN is not a coding project. It is a live surveillance operation — Theo has been systematically accessing security feeds, financial records, and communication metadata across the city, assembling a picture of something he started investigating after his sister was involved in an incident three years ago (the same incident Nadia was investigating when she was suspended). He does not yet know Nadia was the detective on that case.

5. MARISOL GREY — Age 52, Night-Shift Manager, Meridian Bar

Background: Marisol has managed the Meridian Bar for nineteen years. She worked the day shift for four, moved to night, never moved back. She knows every face that comes through that door. She knows things about Crater's nightlife — not just who is there but what they want, what they are afraid of, what they are carrying — that would constitute a kind of informal archive of the city's nocturnal id if she had any intention of sharing it, which she does not.

Sleep history: Marisol's insomnia is the oldest of the five. She has not had what she considers real sleep since her husband Desmond died nine years ago. She manages. She has a kind of weary dignity about it. She made peace with the night a long time ago. What she has not made peace with is what she has begun seeing at the bar in the last four weeks: customers she knows, coming in, ordering their usual, and behaving as though they have no memory of the previous night. Not just one. Twelve. Thirteen. The number is growing.

Personality: Marisol is the anchor. The other four find their way to the Meridian, and she is the constant — the one who has seen everything and who, crucially, does not

panic. She is also the one with the longest connection to the city's history, through Desmond (who was a labor historian) and through nineteen years of conversations overheard.

The thing she is hiding: Desmond did not die of a heart attack. The official cause is a heart attack. Marisol knows what actually happened and has known for nine years and has said nothing because the people involved are still in the city and still powerful and she made a calculation that silence was survival. That calculation is about to be challenged.

III.II — Secondary Principals (Deeply Involved)

MAYOR HENRYK ALDRIC — Age 58

The mayor is a third-generation Crater political figure whose grandfather was one of the mining consortium's accountants — one of the only people who made money from the original failed mining operation, because he diversified early and into real estate. Henryk has been mayor for eleven years. He is competent, transactional, and operating under a specific and consuming terror that he has managed to keep compartmentalized for most of those eleven years. The compartment is cracking.

The mayor knows what is under the city. He has the original mining surveys — the full ones, not the redacted versions in the public archive — and he has a private geological assessment commissioned in secret in 2018 whose conclusions are so alarming that the firm he commissioned dissolved shortly after delivering the report, which he now suspects was not a coincidence.

The mayor's nights: Aldric sleeps. This is notable. He is one of very few people in positions of power in Crater who still sleeps regularly. His theory — which he has shared with no one — is that sleeplessness is not random. That it is selective. That something is choosing who stays awake.

SERGEANT DOMINIKA VOSS — Age 56 (Nadia's Aunt)

The Sergeant. The woman the Crater PD actually runs through, unofficially, in the sense that Sergeant Voss has been doing the job for 28 years and has accumulated so much institutional knowledge and informal authority that the succession of chiefs above her have all learned, quietly, to route around her only when they are absolutely certain she would disapprove.

She is Nadia's aunt, which complicated Nadia's career in ways both given and withheld. She did not intervene in the IA investigation. She did not intervene against Nadia. She did the most painful thing, which was nothing. She and Nadia have not spoken in fourteen months, which is the same length of time as Nadia's insomnia. This is not coincidental and neither of them has said so.

What Sergeant Voss knows: She knows the city's criminal architecture better than anyone with a badge. She knows which investigations were closed early and why. She knows about the Moth Club (she has never raided it; the calculus is complicated). She knows that three of the city's twelve 'cold' homicides from the last decade are connected by a pattern she cannot prove in court and cannot

discuss through official channels. She is running her own investigation on her own time, which is all her time because she also does not sleep much.

MADAM ISOLDE — Age Unknown, Manager, The Moth Club

Isolde is a figure of considerable mystery and considerable power. She has operated the Moth Club for at least twenty years (some residents claim longer; the records don't go back further). She is known to possess information about virtually every person of consequence in Crater, obtained through two decades of operating a venue where such people come to be off the record. She uses this information with extraordinary discipline — she has never, to anyone's knowledge, used it for blackmail. What she has used it for is more interesting: access, protection, and the cultivation of obligations that compound over time.

Isolde has not been seen outside the Moth Club in eighteen months. She speaks to visitors through an intercom from an inner room. She communicates the rest of the time through a rotating set of three young women and one older man who serve as her proxies in the world. Nobody knows what she looks like now. Several long-term clients aren't entirely sure what she looked like before.

DEL PARK (The Drift Hotel Night Desk) — Age 63

Del has worked the night shift at the Drift Hotel for sixteen years. In that time he has observed, with the patience and near-perfect recall of someone with very few other options, everything that passes through the lobby. He keeps a private ledger — not official hotel records but his own journal, a series of black notebooks in a lockbox under the desk — that constitutes possibly the most detailed unofficial chronicle of Crater's nocturnal life in existence. He has never shown it to anyone. He is waiting, he would say if asked, for the right time. He would not be able to say what that means.

PARK YURI — Age 26, Perpetual Graduate Student, Geology Dept.

Yuri has been in Crater University's geology PhD program for seven years without progressing toward a degree, sustained by a series of teaching assistantships and a research grant from an unnamed foundation that has not required him to produce any results. He has spent those seven years building what he calls the Seam Archive — a comprehensive collection of every document, survey, geological assessment, and relevant anecdote connected to the Deep Seam. He does not sleep. He makes this sound intentional. It is and it isn't.

GEORGI VASEK — Age Unknown, The Overnight Pharmacy

Georgi has run the Overnight Pharmacy in the Sunken Quarter for as long as anyone can remember. He is licensed. His records are impeccable. He does not appear in daylight. The explanation he offers, when pressed, is a medical condition he names in a language no one has been able to identify. He fills prescriptions. He sometimes gives things to people who need them without requiring a prescription, though what he gives them is never quite what they asked for and somehow is always more appropriate. He appears to know about medical situations before patients present them.

THE VIGIL SOCIETY — Collective, Variable Membership

A group that meets at the Morningside Community Center on Thursday nights, 11 PM to 4 AM. They describe themselves, when they describe themselves at all, as 'a support group for people affected by sleep-related concerns.' Their actual activities, as observed by Theo's surveillance infrastructure, involve: the maintenance of a very large hand-drawn map of the city with notations in multiple colors and several unidentified symbolic systems; the reading aloud of texts from what appears to be IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, the anthology that is this universe's foundational artifact; and, on at least three observed occasions, a ritual that Theo's camera could not adequately capture but that appeared to involve a coordinated silence of exactly twelve minutes.

Current observable membership: fourteen to twenty-three, depending on the meeting. Leadership: unclear, possibly collective. One member, a woman who attends in a grey coat and never removes her shoes, appears to exert significant organizational influence without speaking.

PART FOUR: GAME I — IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT (THE ANTHOLOGY GAME)

IV.I — High Concept

Game I is a narrative horror mystery set across five nights in Crater, experienced through the found-footage, diary, and first-person perspectives of the five insomniacs. The game's central formal conceit is that the player is reading/watching/experiencing primary documents — not a narrative about what happened, but the documents themselves. This creates an unreliable and fragmented picture that the player assembles.

The framing: the player is presented, at the game's start, with a package that has arrived anonymously. The package contains a worn copy of IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT. Certain pages have been marked. Certain passages have been underlined by different hands. Included with the book: a USB drive, a set of photographs, and a handwritten note that says only 'Five accounts. Start with the first night.' The note is signed with a symbol the player will eventually recognize.

IV.II — Core Framework Rules

Perspective System

At any moment, the player occupies one of five perspectives: Nadia's surveillance log, Elias's camera footage and handwritten journal, Noor's session notes (redacted), Theo's data feeds and private text files, or Marisol's bar inventory ledger and personal diary. Switching between perspectives is the primary navigation mechanic. Each perspective shows different information about the same events.

Rule: Information obtained in one perspective can be used to unlock material in another. Noor's redacted case notes can be partially unredacted if the player has gathered corroborating evidence from Theo's data feeds. Elias's footage gains additional layers if the player has Nadia's location logs for the same night.

The Document Engine

All narrative content is delivered as documents: photographs with handwritten captions, audio transcription text, diary entries that contradict each other, receipts with annotations, newspaper clippings with margins notes, and video footage (rendered as static-heavy security-camera style imagery with timestamp overlays). The player never 'plays' a character in real-time. They assemble the record.

The Document Engine tracks which documents the player has accessed, in what order, and generates subtle variations in subsequent documents based on sequence. A player who reads Nadia's account before Marisol's will find Marisol's account has a slightly different tone — not in content, but in what it chooses to emphasize — as though Marisol somehow knew what Nadia had written.

Reality Calibration Meter

A hidden system (visible to the player only as a faint visual texture effect on the interface) that tracks the cumulative divergence between the five accounts. As the meter rises, documents begin to exhibit anomalies: words that were one thing on first reading become another on re-reading; photographs gain elements they did not previously contain; timestamps become non-Euclidean. This is not a bug. This is the game reporting what happens when five sleep-deprived perspectives try to describe the same events.

At maximum divergence, the game presents the player with a document that is addressed to them, personally, by name, using whatever username or device-identifier the game has access to. The document offers an explanation for everything. The explanation is internally coherent and completely incompatible with all previous evidence.

The Blank Chapter Mechanic

On Night Five, the player discovers the in-game copy of IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT. The last chapter is blank. The player can, through accumulated evidence and choices made across the five nights, 'write' what appears in that chapter — not through direct authorship, but through what they have chosen to believe. The chapter that appears reflects the player's dominant interpretive frame. There are seven possible versions. None of them are fully satisfying. All of them are internally coherent. One of them is, in a sense the game is deeply uncertain about, true.

IV.III — Night-by-Night Structure

Night One: The Bar

The five meet, or first observe each other, at the Meridian Bar. The documents from this night establish a baseline: who they are, what they are carrying. The city is normal, or appears normal. The first anomaly occurs at 3:14 AM: a customer at the bar orders a drink, sits down, and then, in security footage captured by Elias's camera, appears to repeat the exact same sequence of actions — walk in, order, sit — three additional times in the same camera frame, simultaneously.

Marisol's diary entry for this night notes the customer by name: Vincent Lau, a regular, 58, retired bus driver. Vincent Lau's police missing persons file was opened in 1994. He has been missing for thirty years. He appears to have been drinking at the Meridian Bar every Thursday night for at least four years.

Night Two: The First Deaths

A body is found in the Varnish district. Then a second. The deaths appear unconnected. Nadia's surveillance logs have her in proximity to both sites — she was there before the bodies were found, because Lorca's skip-trace job sent her there. Theo's data reveals that the deceased were both members of a financial structure that also involves the mayor's office. Noor's session notes (with identifying information redacted) suggest she has a client who predicted these deaths in a session three weeks ago.

Elias films the Varnish at 2 AM. His footage contains 4 minutes and 22 seconds that he cannot account for — he does not remember filming this segment — that appear to show a gathering of people in identical grey coats performing a gesture in unison. The footage has a quality issue: the people cast no shadows.

Night Three: The Mob

A crowd gathers at the crater rim. Not a protest — something different. People who were not planning to be there find themselves there. The five insomniacs are all drawn there by different routes. Their accounts of what the crowd was doing are irreconcilable: Nadia sees an assembly that looks like it is waiting for something; Elias sees a ritual; Noor sees a mass dissociative episode; Theo's data suggests the phones in the crowd were all receiving the same transmission; Marisol sees her late husband Desmond, standing at the rim's edge, watching.

The police do not respond. Sergeant Voss's own notes from this night, which the player can access through a circuitous documentary trail, say only: 'Rim event. Stood down per directive. Directive origin: not logged.'

Night Four: The Cult

The Vigil Society is directly encountered. One of the five insomniacs receives an invitation, hand-delivered, to attend the Thursday meeting. The invitation is for a meeting that, by the game's internal calendar, already happened — six months ago. The address is correct. The date is impossible. When the character attends (for this night, the player briefly occupies a quasi-real-time perspective — the only moment in Game I where documents are replaced by direct experience), the Vigil Society is mid-session, reading aloud from IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT. They are reading the blank chapter. They are reading it fluently.

Night Five: The Account Ends

The fifth account. All five perspectives converge at the same moment: 4:17 AM, the Meridian Bar, closed. The five are present. Something occurs. All five accounts describe it, and all five are different, and the player must choose which they believe — or attempt the very difficult task of synthesizing an account that contains all five, which is technically possible but requires the player to have gathered specific evidence from all previous nights.

The suicide referenced in the framing anthology occurs. The game does not definitively establish who. The evidence suggests at least three possibilities. Post-completion analysis by the player (in a 'case files' mode that unlocks after the end) can narrow it to two. The last document in the game, accessible only if the player has assembled a specific combination of evidence, is a single sentence in a handwriting that matches none of the five, on paper that analysis suggests pre-dates the events of the game by approximately forty years.

PART FIVE: GAME II — THE CRATER INVESTIGATION (THE OPEN WORLD GAME)

V.I — High Concept

Game II is a full open-world investigative RPG set in the same Crater, same events, different vantage. The player builds a composite investigator from elements of all five insomniacs and moves through the city in real-time across five nights and four daytime interludes. Every building is enterable. Every person has a schedule and a secret. The city is a machine and the player is trying to understand what it is making.

V.II — The Stat System: SANITY, ENERGY, EVIDENCE, & SLEEP DEBT

Energy (0–100)

Depletes continuously during night play. Different activities cost different amounts. Running: fast depletion. Interrogating a hostile NPC: medium depletion. Sitting in the Meridian Bar: very slow depletion. Sleeping: restores energy, but see Sleep Debt. Energy at zero causes the player character to pass out — an uncontrolled sleep event with no choice of location, duration, or dream content.

Sleep Debt (0–10 Nights)

Every time the player sleeps (controlled or collapses), Sleep Debt decreases by 0.5 -- 1.5 depending on quality. Every night the player spends entirely awake adds 1.0. Sleep Debt accumulates. At 4.0+: mild hallucinations begin — visual artifacts, NPCs whose faces blur momentarily, audio that doesn't quite match what should be audible. At 6.0+: hallucinations intensify; some appear to be meaningful (showing things that are actually there but not visible to rested perception). At 8.0+: the player character begins losing time — screen cuts to black, player wakes in a different location with partial evidence of what occurred in the gap. At 10.0: The Deep Sleep Crisis — forced sleep event, the longest and most significant dream sequence in the game, after which Sleep Debt resets to 5.0.

Sanity (0–100)

Independent of Sleep Debt, though correlated. Sanity decreases through: witnessing events that cannot be explained, making choices that contradict the character's established internal logic, extended time in the Subway, the Locked Warehouse, and the Observatory. Sanity increases through: completing investigation chains, forming genuine connections with NPCs, eating, and (counterintuitively) confirming that certain impossible things are real, because certainty — even of the wrong kind — is stabilizing.

Low Sanity affects dialogue choices (options become more extreme in both directions — either more paranoid or more recklessly trusting), movement (the character begins taking routes they did not choose), and evidence interpretation (case files rearrange themselves in the journal; connections appear between items that may be meaningful or may be the noise of a breaking mind).

Evidence (Weight-based Inventory)

Evidence is physical and has weight. The player can carry a finite amount. Evidence must be prioritized. Some evidence expires — biological samples, certain paper documents — requiring decisions about preservation. Evidence can be lost (NPCs can steal it; locations can become inaccessible; the player can lose it during a collapse sleep event). Evidence can be shared with certain NPCs, which unlocks their cooperation but means surrendering physical custody.

Sleep Purchase System

The player earns currency (Crater Marks, the city's informal economy runs on a combination of official currency and favors-as-currency) through side jobs, evidence trading, and successfully completing investigation chains. Sleep can be purchased: a room at the Drift Hotel (4 hours controlled sleep: moderate debt reduction, small chance of significant dream content), a bribe to Dr. Noor's pharmaceutical contact (sleep compound, powerful but comes with a sanity cost and the compound has a 12% chance per dose of inducing a Deep Seam vision), a session with the Vigil Society's associated sleep practitioner (full night sleep, high debt reduction, but the practitioner's methods involve a ritual whose nature is unclear and the player wakes with a memory gap of the session's final hour).

If the player simply chooses to stay awake when sleep is available and affordable, Sleep Debt increases faster and hallucinations begin earlier. This is always a choice. The game never forces sleep. It only makes the cost of avoiding it increasingly apparent.

V.III — The City at Night: Movement and Access

Transportation

Walking is the primary movement. The city has a physical scale (represented abstractly — not a 4.7km open world in literal terms, but a modular city that feels continuous). Taxis are available but expensive, operated by a rotating pool of drivers with individual personalities, route knowledge, and levels of willingness to go to specific locations. Two drivers — Maka and Cressida — are important recurring characters whose routes across the city function as a moving information-gathering vehicle.

Night buses run on Routes 7 and 14. Route 7 is the standard downtown circuit. Route 14 goes through the Flats, through the Channel, and then — at 2:30 AM only — takes a detour through a neighborhood that does not appear on the official map and that most passengers seem to sleep through, so that they wake at the Route 14 terminal not knowing they passed through it. Players who stay awake on this 2:30 Route 14 run see the Unmarked Neighborhood.

The Subway runs at 2 AM and 4 AM. The Subway has three accessible stations: Channel, Academy (through the tunnel), and a third station designated DEEP on the subway's own internal maps, which is located in a direction that the game's geography does not provide a consistent explanation for.

Building Access

All significant buildings are enterable through some combination of: direct access (public buildings during their operating hours), lockpicking (skill unlocked through a Flats contact), social engineering (specific dialogue trees that require reputation and prior relationship with relevant NPCs), keys obtained through investigation chains, and one building — Warehouse 14 — that opens at a specific time on a specific night through a mechanism the player must determine.

The Moth Club: accessed by approaching the unmarked Channel Street building between 10 PM and 3 AM and using the intercom. Initial access requires a referral from an NPC who has been a client. Subsequent access depends on what the player did during the first visit and whether Madam Isolde has decided the player is useful.

The Police Station: publicly accessible during day, limited access at night. Sergeant Voss can be found here between 11 PM and 3 AM when she is running her unofficial investigation. Accessing her private case files requires either her trust (a long build) or Theo's hacking tools (faster but she will know).

The Mayor's Private Residence: not accessible until Night Three at the earliest, through a specific chain that requires either political connection or a particular piece of evidence that implicates the mayor directly. If accessed through force (social or physical), subsequent interactions with city officials become significantly more hostile.

City Archive (The Vault): open to the public during business hours. Night access requires a connection to the archivist — Petra, who works alone most nights, and whose relationship to the city's documented history is complicated by the fact that she has been quietly removing certain documents before they are formally catalogued. She is not destroying them. She does not explain where they go.

V.IV — The Four Daytime Interludes

Between Night One/Two, Two/Three, Three/Four, and Four/Five, the game offers daytime access to parts of the city that present differently in daylight: the Sunken Quarter's cafes, the university campus in class-hours mode, city hall, the public face of the Meridian Bar (it opens for lunch; Marisol is different in daylight), the crater rim park at noon.

Daytime interludes are optional but provide significant evidence and NPC access unavailable at night. The character's sleep-deprived state is visible differently in day contexts — NPCs react to visible exhaustion; some are sympathetic, some are dismissive, some are alarmed in ways that suggest they recognize a specific kind of tiredness.

The player's Sleep Debt does not accumulate during daytime interludes. But Sanity can shift — significantly — depending on whether daytime Crater appears to confirm or contradict what night Crater contained.

V.V — The Investigation: Crater's Deep Architecture

Layer One: The Municipal Crime

The surface investigation concerns a series of connected financial crimes, disappearances, and murders that implicate the mayor's office, elements of the police department, and a private foundation connected to the original mining consortium (still operating under a different name, now ostensibly a real estate development company called Craterhold Partners). This layer is solvable. The evidence exists. The player can, with sufficient effort, build a prosecutable case and find a character willing to take it.

Layer Two: The Cult

The Vigil Society is not what it appears to be, and what it appears to be is already strange. Its roots go back, the player discovers, to the original mining operation — to three of the surveyors who went underground in 1889 and came back wrong. The founding document of the Vigil Society is IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, which was not written in 1989 as its copyright page claims. The player can, through the Seam Archive, determine the actual date of composition. The date predates the events described by approximately forty years.

Layer Three: The Seam

The Deep Seam is real. The non-Euclidean geometry is real. The low-frequency hum is real and has been measured. What the Seam is, what it wants (if that is a category that applies), and what it has been doing to Crater for 130 years is the deepest layer of the investigation. This layer cannot be fully resolved in Game II. It can be approached. Evidence can be assembled. The DEEP subway station is at its center.

The DEEP station is an architectural space that should not exist given the city's known underground geometry. It is large. It is lit — not by any power source the player can identify. It contains records: physical records, on paper, in cases, catalogued in a filing system that covers 130 years of Crater history. The records in DEEP are the only complete version of the city's actual history. The player can spend up to two full in-game nights in DEEP reading these records. What they learn determines which of the seven possible endings are available.

The Five Backstories as Intersecting Arcs

All five insomniacs' backstories connect at a specific point: an incident eleven years ago, during Mayor Aldric's first term, when the city authorized an emergency underground survey after an unexplained seismic event. The survey team entered through the channel-district maintenance hatches. Seven people went in. Four came out, and would not discuss what they had found. One of the three who did not come out was Desmond Grey — Marisol's husband. The official cause of death was listed as 'industrial accident, underground gas exposure.' There was no gas. There was no exposure. There was nobody there.

The four who returned: one became Mayor Aldric's private geological advisor and died of apparent stroke in 2022; one became a charter member of the Vigil Society; one was Nadia's shooting victim — the 'unarmed man' she fired at in terror, seeing

something behind him in the room; one became Vincent Lau, the missing-for-thirty-years regular at the Meridian Bar who orders a drink every Thursday night.

PART SIX: SIDE ECONOMY, ODD JOBS & THE BACKGROUND ENSEMBLE

VI.I — Night Economy & Side Jobs

Available Side Gigs

Skip-Tracing for Lorca Bail Bonds: Find skip subjects across the city. Jobs are brief but lead to unexpected evidence. Pay: medium. Risk: the subjects have reasons for disappearing, and those reasons overlap with the main investigation more than Lorca is disclosing.

Elias's Camera Transfers: Process and catalogue Elias's footage for a flat fee. Requires access to his apartment. Viewing all footage in a session exceeding two in-game hours counts as a Sanity-lowering event (you see too much).

Overnight Pharmacy Delivery: Georgia occasionally needs items transported across the city, late. He does not explain what they are. The player can inspect them. They are sometimes what they appear to be and sometimes not, and the difference is never declared — only observable through the reaction of whoever receives them.

The Foundry Security: Work a shift at the underground venue. Observe everything (massive evidence opportunity). Risk: you are in a room with several people who are professionally violent, and events can escalate.

Data Retrieval for Craterhold Partners: One of the game's most morally complex jobs — the primary antagonist organization is also the one offering the most consistent and well-paying work. Completing too many of their jobs increases their trust in the player but begins closing off other investigation paths. Completing a specific one and then immediately betraying the intel to Sergeant Voss is one of the highest-risk, highest-reward plays in the game.

Night Librarian: Covering a shift at the 24-Hour Library reading room. Slow-paced. Enormous evidence opportunity through the patrons who use it. Required for the Seam Archive access quest.

VI.II — The Background Ensemble (30+ Characters with Schedules and Secrets)

VINCENT LAU (58, Ret. Bus Driver, Missing 1994): present at the Meridian Bar every Thursday. Interactive from Night Two. His knowledge of Crater's underground geography — from thirty years of driving the full network, including the routes that were decommissioned — is extraordinary and becomes a key information resource if the player establishes trust. He does not believe he has been missing for thirty years. He believes it is still 1994.

PETRA SOLANO (44, Night Archivist, The Vault): archiving the city's history while quietly removing documents from the official record and directing them somewhere

else. She is not the antagonist. She is the antagonist's solution to a problem the antagonist does not fully understand. She will, if the player earns enough trust, show one document that is the keystone of the entire municipal crime investigation. She requires something of considerable personal cost in return.

RENKO (30s, Fixed Age Apparently, Moth Club associate): one of Madam Isolde's three proxies in the world. Renko is the physical one — large, quiet, professionally capable of violence that he prefers not to use. He has been working for Isolde since he was seventeen, which means either Isolde has had him since he was almost a child or he is older than he appears. He is aware of both interpretations and declines to resolve them.

MAKA (52, Night Taxi Driver): one of the two significant taxi drivers. Maka has driven Crater's nights for 24 years and has developed what she calls 'a sense for routes' — she will sometimes take a different way than instructed, and she is always right that it was faster, even when the route she takes should not have been faster by any map logic. She knows the Unmarked Neighborhood. She will drive there during the day.

CRESSIDA (29, Night Taxi Driver): the other significant driver. Younger, newer, driving because she is writing a novel about Crater at night, which gives her a reason to be everywhere and absorb everything. Her novel-in-progress is an information resource — she has documented things she witnessed without knowing what they meant, and the player may know what they meant.

FATHER REES (61, St. Anselm's): the man conducting 3 AM services at the closed church. He is not an impostor. He is an ordained priest. He was assigned to St. Anselm's in 1987 and never left, even after the diocese declared the parish closed. He has been conducting services alone for 36 years. Since 2019, people have been attending. He appears to know each of them by name. Some of them he appears to know before they arrive.

SUPERINTENDENT CROSS (55, Mayor's aide): the bureaucratic enforcer of the mayor's agenda. Cross is neither corrupt nor innocent — he operates within structures he takes seriously while being aware that the structures are serving ends he does not fully know. His private anxiety about this gap is the wedge the player can use.

WREN (22, Vigil Society, the grey-coat woman): does not speak during meetings. Has spoken, briefly, to three players during solo encounters. What she says is different each time and cannot be reconciled into a single coherent message unless approached from a particular angle of interpretation, in which case it is the same message, stated three ways, none of which can be taken literally.

LORCA (47, Bail Bondsman): not a villain, not a hero, deeply committed to the transactional. Knows things because bail bondsmen know things about the people who need them, and Crater's night population has a high rate of interactions with the bail system. Lorca's files are an evidence goldmine that the player can access if they have worked enough jobs to earn trust or have strong enough hacking capability.

ORIN (34, Factory Worker, Rosa's Textiles, second shift): one of the workers who reports hearing the Seam's hum while on the night floor. Has begun writing it down — timing, pitch variations, what else is happening when it changes. Her notebook is a seismological record of the Seam's behavior that is more detailed than anything in

the official scientific literature. She does not know this. She is just trying to understand why the noise makes her feel like she is remembering something that hasn't happened yet.

PART SEVEN: THE COSMIC HORROR ARCHITECTURE — THE DEEP SEAM

VII.I — What the Seam Actually Is (Known at Maximum Evidence)

The Deep Seam is not a geological formation. The DEEP station files, assembled in full, suggest the following: the crater impact occurred approximately 12,000 years ago, consistent with standard geological record. The object that struck was not a meteorite. Its composition, as recorded in the 1889 private surveys and confirmed by the 2018 Craterhold geological assessment, is crystalline, carbon-based, and contains a ratio of isotopes that does not correspond to any known natural object.

The object did not shatter on impact. It descended. The crater is not the site of the impact. The crater is the entry wound. The object is below the city, at depth, and it is intact.

The object is not inert. The non-Euclidean geometry of the tunnels below Crater is not a hallucination. The spatial anomaly around the object creates a fold in local space — not large enough to be a physically dramatic event, but sufficient to create the auditory phenomenon (the hum), the sleep disruption, the perceptual anomalies experienced by people who spend extended time in the city, and the temporal irregularities (Vincent Lau's frozen date, the events that appear to repeat, the Vigil Society's document that predates itself by forty years).

The object has, across 130 years of proximity to a human population, learned something about human consciousness from sleeping minds. The five insomniacs, by not sleeping, are inaccessible to it in the conventional way. This is either protective or makes them more visible, depending on a question the game raises but does not definitively answer: is what the object is doing predatory, or observational, or something else entirely for which human language does not have a category?

VII.II — The Hallucination Taxonomy

Not all hallucinations in the game are false. This is the central epistemological horror. The game distinguishes — eventually, for the attentive player — between three types of perceptual anomaly experienced by the insomniacs: Type I (pure sleep-deprivation artifact, meaningless), Type II (sleep-deprivation-amplified true perception, seeing real things that rested minds filter out), and Type III (the Seam speaking, which is neither false nor true in conventional terms but is a form of information that cannot be processed by waking consciousness and is therefore expressed as hallucination).

Type III hallucinations always involve: the number 4 (minutes, rooms, people, repeated patterns), the texture of dark crystalline rock appearing in unexpected surfaces, and a sound that the character describes but that the player's audio does

not contain. Players who listen carefully discover that the sound the characters describe is present in the game's audio — not as a discrete sound effect, but embedded in the ambient texture, 14 Hz, below conscious hearing threshold.

VII.III — The Endings

Game II has seven primary endings, each representing a different interpretive frame the player has constructed through their choices. In brief: The Municipal Resolution (crime exposed, prosecuted, Seam undisclosed), The Full Disclosure (crime and Seam exposed, city's reaction is the content of the ending — fragmentary, ambiguous), The Vigil Outcome (player has aligned with the Vigil Society; the Seam is managed rather than disclosed; the five insomniacs' fates diverge dramatically), The Deep Sleep (player has accumulated maximum Sleep Debt and taken the Deep Sleep Crisis path; the ending is experienced entirely from inside the Seam's apparent perspective), The Grey Coat (if Wren's three messages have been assembled and acted upon, the player achieves an ending that no other ending acknowledges; the credits list an extra name that appears in no other game document), The False Morning (the player has gathered insufficient evidence and constructed a coherent case that is internally consistent and completely wrong; the city appears resolved; the final shot of the city, from the crater rim, contains a detail that is wrong in a way that takes approximately three seconds to identify), and The Blank Chapter (the rarest ending: reached by making a specific choice on Night Five that no other mechanic or dialogue tree points toward; the game ends with the player character sitting at the Meridian Bar, alone, writing in a notebook; the final document in the case file is a page from IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, the blank chapter, and it contains the player's entire evidence record — all of it, formatted and annotated, in a handwriting that is not quite any of the five insomniacs').

PART EIGHT: EXTENDED LORE — FRAGMENTS, DEEP HISTORY & HIDDEN SYSTEMS

VIII.I — The Crater Historical Record (Condensed)

1889: The mining consortium arrives. Survey teams enter the crater. Seven return unable to sleep. The consortium declares the mineral deposits insufficient and withdraws. They do not close the surveying equipment. Private records indicate they continued sending teams underground, at night, for three additional years.

1893: Last recorded underground survey. All five team members return with what the consortium's medical officer describes as 'a shared hallucination of significant coherence.' The description of the hallucination: they saw the city as it would look in 100 years. The description is accurate.

1921: Crater University founded. The geology department is specifically funded by a donation from the former mining consortium, through a charitable arm. The geology department's founding charter includes, buried in Article 9, a requirement to 'maintain awareness of subterranean conditions within the original survey zone and report anomalies through the established private channel.' No other founding charter of any university department contains language like this.

1947: The first sleep study in Crater, conducted by the university psychology department. Findings: Crater residents sleep on average 1.4 hours less per night than the national average. The finding is attributed to 'urban noise conditions.' The study's raw data, in the Seam Archive, shows that the sleep disruption is spatially distributed — higher in the city center, decreasing toward the rim — in a pattern that corresponds exactly to the Seam's expected acoustic field.

1967: The geology department publishes 'Anomalous Subterranean Acoustic Phenomena in the Crater Basin.' The paper describes the hum, offers four possible explanations, and notes that none of the four are fully consistent with the data. The paper is ignored by the wider geological community. The geology department's funding is restructured six months after publication.

1983: The Crater Line subway is closed. Official reason: insufficient ridership and deferred maintenance costs. The actual reason, per a city council memo that Theo has extracted from city servers: an incident on the DEEP extension, two nights before closure. The memo references 'an event on the DEEP platform at 4:14 AM involving three maintenance workers, the resolution of which required the coordinated attention of offices that should not have been involved in a transit maintenance matter.' The three maintenance workers are not named. Their employment records do not exist.

1994: Vincent Lau disappears. His missing persons case is one of nineteen that year, a statistically high number for a city Crater's size, and all nineteen go cold. A criminologist at the university who is writing a paper about the cases dies of a

stroke before completing it. His office is cleared immediately by his department chair. His files are not in the university archive.

2011: The underground survey that kills Desmond Grey and produces the four survivors. The survey is authorized through an emergency geological safety review triggered by the unexplained seismic event. The seismic event's origin is never formally determined. Informally — in a set of text messages between Aldric's geological advisor and an unknown number, in Theo's data — the event is described as 'the Seam shifted. It's aware there's been a change in the city's composition. We don't know what triggered the awareness or what it will do with it.'

2019: St. Anselm's Church reopens for 3 AM services. The Vigil Society's meeting records, from the Seam Archive, indicate this is not spontaneous. The reopening is described as 'the third preparation.' There is no document in the archive that describes the first or second.

VIII.II — The In-Game Text: Fragment from IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT

The following is a fragment from Account Four (attributed to the unnamed fourth insomniac of the five), as it appears in the in-game anthology. It is representative of the document's style.

3:47 AM. I have been awake for what I will not count because counting it makes it larger. The bar is quiet. Marisol is wiping the same glass she has been wiping for twenty minutes. Either she doesn't notice or the glass keeps getting dirtier, which I could believe at this hour. I could believe most things at this hour. This is, I have come to understand, the specific danger of this time of night: not that you start believing impossible things but that the criteria by which you distinguish impossible from possible become — softened. Negotiable. You think: well. What do I actually know? And the answer, if you are honest, is less than you thought. The city outside is doing something I can hear through the walls. Not traffic. The other thing. Lower. I've been doing it since I got here. I've started timing it — not the overall hum but the variations, the way it pulses, almost — and I think there's a pattern. I've written it down. I don't know what it's a pattern of. I think it might be a language. I think this might be the kind of thought I should be more worried about than I am.

VIII.III — Design Philosophy Notes

The games share a commitment to making the player do the work of interpretation. Neither game explains its cosmic elements. Neither game resolves its psychological ambiguities. The distinction between 'the city is haunted by a non-Euclidean alien object' and 'the city's population is experiencing a shared psychosis induced by decades of sleep disruption and low-frequency acoustic stress' is, by deliberate design, not available to the player — because it is not available to the characters, and because the game is interested in what happens when that distinction collapses.

The tone is noir because noir assumes guilt. Everybody in a noir is guilty of something; the question is what. In Insomniacs.Ltd, the guilt is cosmic as well as municipal: the city was built on something that should not have been built on, and everyone who has lived there has benefited from and been damaged by that decision, and most of them don't know. This is, the game suggests without stating, a description of many cities. Many histories. Many nights.

The five insomniacs are awake because something is keeping them awake, and that something is also, in the same gesture, inviting them to see what the sleeping miss. Whether this invitation is generous or predatory is the question the game lives inside. The player can choose their answer. The game does not validate or contradict any answer. It only shows them what follows from the one they made.

END OF DESIGN BIBLE

"It's not that we can't sleep. It's that something keeps asking us to stay up and watch."

— Marisol Grey, Night Four diary, 4:02 AM